DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 138 631 TM 006 258

AUTHOR Adams, Ronald D.
TITLE Roles of Higher Education Agencies and Local Education Agencies in the Conduct, Dissemination and Utilization of Educational Research.
PUB DATE [Apr 77]
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (61st, New York, New York, April 4-8, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Decision Making; Educational Finance; *Educational Practice; *Educational Research; Educational Researchers; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Information Dissemination; Interprofessional Relationship; *Research and Development Centers; Research Problems; *Research Utilization; School Districts

ABSTRACT

Selected issues in educational research and development are discussed as they relate to local educational agencies and institutions of higher education. Local education agencies are defined as public supported schools (elementary, middle/jr. high and high schools) and institutions of higher education as state supported colleges and universities having teacher education programs. Topics include the following: (1) producers of educational research and development--who are they? (2) researchers and practitioners--what is the nature of the relationship? and (3) future outlook--what can be done? Ideas for each of the above topics are presented by reporting from selected articles and papers. While the focus of the paper is on local education agencies and institutions of higher education, other state and national agencies are discussed as they influence educational research and development. (Author/MV)

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Roles of Higher Education Agencies and Local Education Agencies in the Conduct, Dissemination and Utilization of Educational Research

Presented By:

Ronald D. Adams, Director
Office of Educational Research
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101

AERA National Convention
SIG/Researchers for Action

April 5, 1977

TM006 258

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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A. Introduction

The purpose of this address is to discuss selected issues in educational research and development as they relate to local educational agencies and institutions of higher education. Local education agencies are defined as public supported schools (elementary, middle/jr. high and high schools) and institutions of higher education as state supported colleges and universities having teacher education programs. Topics include the following: 1) Producers of Educational Research and Development--Who are they?; 2) Researchers and Practitioners--What is the nature of the relationship?; 3) Future Outlook--What can be done? I have attempted to present ideas for each of the above topics by reporting from selected articles and papers. The positions presented are generally reflective of my own at this time.

The education community is, of course, greater than the two categories of local education agencies and institutions of higher education, and the influence of other educational agencies must be considered. Educational research and development is conducted by various agencies for varying levels of education. Thus, while the focus of the paper is on local education agencies and institutions of higher education, other state and national agencies will be discussed as they influence educational research and development.

In discussions of this kind the risk of over-generalization is great. Clark (4) reports there are 1,367 four-year institutions of higher education with state approved preservice teacher preparation programs. He states,

> "The configuration of schools, colleges, and departments of education [SCDEs] in this country is complex and diverse. There is almost nothing that can be said about SCDEs which cannot be refuted by noting that it is inapplicable to

> many SCDEs. Issues relating to schools of education are not clear and proposed solutions to problems confronting them are not simple."

The differences among local education agencies are even more obvious. Differences between states and differences between school districts within states as to financial support, population distribution, staffing patterns, etc. are evident even to the casual observer. The general remarks made within this paper certainly are made with the realization of the considerable variance within the two broadly defined agencies.

B. Producers of Educational Research and Development--Who are they?

According to Hodgkinson (7) educational research from 1800 to 1920 was conducted primarily by psychologists of "elitist" backgrounds and was primarily descriptive in nature. From 1920 to 1960, primarily due to the large numbers of people who sought upward mobility through education, there was an intense involvement in research on educational practices. Much of the research during this period was concerned with measurement of aptitudes. During the period from 1960-1975 the enrollment in elementary and secondary education has declined. This decline and the "wide-spread disillusionment" with education as the road to wealth has resulted in a reduction of new spending for education. Educational research has shifted from aptitude to proficiency measurement. While formerly dominated by psychologists, educational research is now moving toward multi-disciplinary strategies.

From this historical prospective educational research has been primarily the domain of institutions of higher education. Recent data reported by Clark (4) support this contention. He states,

> ". . . despite the often-repeated criticisms of knowledge production and utilization programs in schools of education, approximately two-thirds of the contributors to the most widely respected and influential research journals in education are from SCDEs, [Schools, Colleges, and Departments of Education]; and nearly 60 percent of the contributors to the most widely respected and broadly distributed journals for practitioners are faculty members in schools of education"

Another interesting finding reported by Clark was the small percentage of SCDEs (five percent) which are engaged actively and regularly in educational R & D.

A major federal thrust in educational research and development over the last one and a half decades has been the national education labs and centers. These somewhat controversial federal agencies have been both praised and criticized by the educational community. Praise has been given for their development of educational products of demonstrated effectiveness. At the same time, they have been criticized for using federal funds to develop products to be turned over to commercial interests for profit making. Research questions investigated by these federal agencies have often been abandoned after considerable investment and before substantiative knowledge is obtained. The abandonment can be attributed in part to frequent changes in priorities of USOE or NIE.

It is not readily apparent from the literature how much of a contribution and/or the quality of the contribution that local education agencies make to educational R & D. In a review of the literature, Brown (2) reported two independent studies by Cain and by Howe that agreed in regard to placement of educational research and evaluation specialists. In both studies very few were employed by local education agencies. Brown also reported a conclusion by McLean,

". . . the training of research specialists to work with school districts has not caused a great change in classroom practice." It is interesting to note, however, that in Hodgkinson's (7) report he makes the statement, "Virtually every major school system now has a division of research as do state education departments." It would appear that there are numerous R & D positions in local education agencies. However, there does not appear to be much of a market for R & D trained professionals in these agencies.

Another interesting perspective of R & D efforts is the financial support by various agencies. Hodgkinson gives the estimates for National Funding of Educational RDD&E for 1975. The local government's share was estimated at $4 million or about .6 of one percent of the total $617 million. The contribution of state governments was estimated at $40 million while the Federal government's share was by far the largest at $511 million. All other agencies totaled only $62 million with $57 million of this amount contributed by private foundations.

It can be reasonably concluded that educational research and development is conducted for the most part by a relatively few IHE's and by national labs and R & D centers. Support for the educational R & D has been primarily by the federal government (approximately 83%) with state governments and private foundations adding about 7 percent and 8 percent, respectively.

C. Researchers and Practitioners--What is the nature of the relationship?

My interpretation of the term "educational researchers" as used by those authors cited in this paper is defined as those professional

educators who have major responsibilities in the conduct of problem oriented research as opposed to those professional educators who may engage peripherally in research activities. They are also differentiated from institutional researchers whose primary duties are institutional data management and reporting. As established earlier, the educational researcher will probably be supported by federal funds in a university or federal agency. I do not intend to imply that there are no educational researchers in the local or state department educational agencies, although little was found regarding their contribution to educational research and development.

The practitioner is perceived to include the public school teachers and administrators and their respective representative organizations. Of course, general comments regarding the relationship between researchers and practitioners will not be equally applicable to teachers and administrators, but I believe enough similarity exists to warrant their inclusion in the same category for this discussion. While not included as practitioners specifically, much of the following discussions has implication for teacher education in institutions of higher education.

There is evidence that a poor relationship exists between educational researchers and practitioners. Baldridge, et.al. (1) related, "Moreover, the relationships between educational researchers and school personnel are breaking down." They further state, "In short, our inquiries into the research issues showed that, at a time when increasing cooperation between R & D people and field users is needed, field users are increasingly reluctant to cooperate, and this resistance has developed rapidly." Start (11) provided

arguments for educational research being ineffectual and noncontributing to educational policy. Brown (2) stated, "Finally, a reason included in many of the documents found in this ERIC search was that research often has little to do with the real world of teaching."

Reasons for this gap between educational researchers and practitioners are varied but, I think, explainable. Baldridge, et.al. (1) reported that major problems have resulted because of different orientations blown out of proportion into negative stereotypes. The researcher is seen by field practitioners as "an unfeeling egghead with computer printout in hand who advances impractical theories to schools populated with random samples." The practitioner is viewed by the researcher as a "non-intellectual, shortsighted school person bogged down in a world of lesson plans, report cards, and Dick and Jane." Factors contributing to the negative stereotypes and poor relations were given as the 1) nature of research, 2) growth of professionalism in schools, 3) lack of feedback from research projects, and 4) fear of evaluation by practitioners.

They also related the rewards system in higher education and other agencies employing R & D professionals as contributing to the problem. They stated, "An academic reward system that pushes researchers away from the very areas field users consider critical is a major cause of the ineffectiveness of R & D professionals in universities and to a lesser degree, in R & D centers and labs." Researchers, because of the rewards of prestige gained from basic research and publication in their chosen field, tend to exclude "practical implications as legitimate subjects for investigation."

Start (11) suggested educational research has little impact on educational policy because it is ineffectual and irrelevant. His reasons are worth noting: 1) Educational research takes more time than is available to the teacher or administrator for decision making. "Decisions have to be made before research evidence can be gathered. Often these decisions have far reaching implications in terms of construction, purchasing, training and administration procedures." 2) The solutions proposed are unusable because of fiscal resources or other limitations rendering such suggested solutions impracticable. 3) Educational research is too often "equivocal." Research is often reported in contexts that are simply not usable due to the "ifs," "buts," and "maybes," the research jargon used, and the technical nature of the findings. While necessary at one level, little has been done to make research applicable to the practitioners. 4) Poor dissemination adds to the problem both because of the nature of research writing and the availability of the research to key people.

Start also made the observation that educational research is used primarily in "optimizing decisions." Once educational decisions are made, educational research is more often than not asked to show how well the decision is working. "Since, for a variety of reasons, decisions precede research, and these decisions often have already had far reaching economic, social and political implications, the post hoc use of research to optimize the policy decisions is often seen as most sensible."

The utilization of research and development efforts in education has somewhat different, yet similar, considerations as to the knowledge production efforts. Pincus (9) has written an intriguing

essay entitled, "Incentives for Innovation in the Public Schools." I will not attempt to deal with the entire analysis made by Pincus but suggest those concerned with innovation in schools study the report. Certain points are quite germane to this discussion and will be briefly discussed.

Pincus reported three factors that appear to be favorable to innovation in the schools: 1) bureaucratic safety, 2) response to external pressure, and 3) approval of peer elites. He reported other general factors identified by other studies as free communication, support from administration and colleagues, high morale, clarity of goal structures, decentralization of authority, professionalism of staff, and organizational autonomy.

Findings from recent studies lead Pincus to conclude, "These findings indicate that large-scale carefully planned R & D efforts are, in curriculum change, likely to be more effective in gaining adoption than mere product efforts." He cited NSF and SWRL programs as examples. However, he also gave several reasons why there is failure to implement innovations effectively.

Specifically, R & D organizations 1) do not provide sufficient implementation guidance for the variety of situations where the innovation is to be tried; 2) those involved in the innovation (student, teachers, and administrators) may not accept the changes necessary for successful adoption; 3) schools simply do not know how to implement the innovation; and 4) the "language" of the innovation may be such that this in itself becomes the focus rather than the translation into practice.

Pincus (9) further related problems schools have with innovation adoption due to funding practices by federal and state governments. This funding usually is through direct grants to school districts or through funded R & D activities. Among the problems presented were 1) tendency to subsidize educational research and development without particular regard to their effects on various outcomes of schooling; 2) districts can introduce and perpetuate pet projects by ignoring evaluation entirely or by ignoring evidence as to the success in meeting the objectives of the innovation; 3) too short a test period for innovations (usually one to three years); 4) tendency for local schools to view federal funds as "soft money" without seriously considering the future continuation of the innovation; and 5) the lack of consistent policy and priority setting by the governments resulting in cynicism on the part of local school districts toward innovation.

Others such as Kaplan (8), Emans (5), and Burdin (3) have indicated a need for more efficient dissemination of research and the need for research efforts to be translated into usable practice. The conclusion seems to be that relations between the major producers of educational research and development and those who tend to profit from its conduct, the practitioners, can be described as poor. Researchers are generally viewed as insensitive to practitioner needs, and the research and development products are perceived as inappropriate to local school settings. Dissemination of R & D is inefficient and ineffective, and adoption of innovation produced by research can be expected only for short duration if indeed implementation is attempted at all. There appears to be, generally, a lack of planning and coordination for research, development, dissemination, and utilization.

D. Future Outlook--What can be done?

Solutions to problems presented in this paper will not be simplistic nor independent of each other. Research and development production and the utilization of the products of research for the good of education will depend upon the ability of the education community to solve its internal problems and control or at least influence external conditions affecting R & D activities.

Internal Consideration

Increased cooperation and communication between educational researchers and educational practitioners is critical for research, development, dissemination, and utilization (RDD&U) to impact educational practices. Producers and consumers share the responsibility for effective educational research and development--the researcher has to know the practitioner's needs and problems, and the practitioner has to appreciate the researcher's ability and limitations* in helping to meet educational needs and solve educational problems. Through such dialogue the practitioners can make important contributions to the nature of research conducted, thereby being more inclined to utilize the outcomes of research and development labors.

Such dialogue could occur through several vehicles and in different educational settings. National, regional, state, and local conferences could be held to discuss RDD&U. Exchange programs could

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*Emans (5) relates that estimates have been made that only 3 to 30 percent of educational decisions could be influenced by findings from research studies. Those who make policy decisions are concerned with broad practice while researchers seek answers to specific questions.

allow researchers to work in the practitioners' setting and the practitioners to work with researchers for given periods of time. This program could include representatives from local school districts in both teaching and administrative positions, schools, colleges and departments of teacher education, researchers in higher education, researchers in labs and centers, and educators from state departments of education.

According to Pincus (9), educational leaders learn about innovations through briefings, meetings, and informal discussion while researchers disseminate results through journal articles and reports. A medium of communication needs to be established that is usable and used by both the researcher and school leaders.

For intelligent dialogue to occur through any medium, researchers and practitioners must have a common language and share at least a working knowledge of research concepts. The most logical place for practitioners to gain this research sophistication is in colleges and universities through undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs and graduate educational leadership programs. It may be that higher education's two most important contributions to educational R & D in the future will be the educating of the researchers who produce research and the educating of practitioners to understand and use the outcomes of research.

The development and establishment of a national, state, and local network of RDD&U would be a giant step toward making educational research an integral part of educational practice. Sieber (10) suggested the design of such a system. Included in his design requirements were the notions that there should be balance among the following components:

"a. Functions - (basic research, applied research, product development, systems development, dissemination, local problem solving, technical assistance, training, and evaluation);
b. Performers - (social scientists, professional educators, practitioners, NIE staff, other experts);
c. Settings - universities, non-profits, profits; government labs, R & D centers, R & D teams; NIE (inhouse research); big R & D, little R & D;
d. Decision makers and influentials - federal, state and local educational agencies; professionals and disciplines; employers and businessment, minorities;
e. Supply and demand - (R & D resources and the demand for these resources)."

Sieber goes on to indicate these components need to be integrated and viewed as interrelated, not isolated, components. He suggested continuity, not disjointedness, in developing the national system. Quality control was stressed to provide excellence within the system.

I think it is important to re-emphasize two of the suggestions made by Sieber: 1) that R & D should not be limited to just the elite universities or national centers and labs, and 2) that R & D should not be conducted by just the professional researcher, but should be engaged in by professional educators at all levels. One of the developmental problems of creating a workable system of RDD&U would be the delineation of research areas and problems that could be most effectively studied in national labs, regional universities, local school systems, etc. A second problem would be the prioritizing of these functions to meet reasonable funding limitations. A third problem would be the governance of such a large and complicated system. Also, the problem of obtaining the increased financing necessary to even suggest the implementation of such a system is a prime consideration.

Related to the establishment of a formalized system of RDD&U is the potential need of defining new professional roles in this area of education. Professional specialists will probably be needed in such areas as innovation adoption, program engineering, and educational organization research. Liaison and/or mediator specialists in educational RDD&U, dissemination experts, and market specialists will have to be trained and their talents utilized to have the effective system needed to truly impact educational practice. The traditional linear model of first research, second development, third dissemination, and fourth utilization will have to be replaced by a more "non-linear" model as suggested by Baldridge et.al. (1). They stated, "This complex process crosses professional and organizational lines, and it involves schools and researchers with initial planning, development, implementation, and evaluation. Always present is the common goal of using research findings to solve actual educational problems."

External Considerations

For RDD&U to become an effective part of education, increased resources must be obtained. The prospects do not look favorable. Hansford (6), while supporting research and dissemination efforts, makes the statements,

> "Unfortunately, it is often the programs of greatest promise which are most prone to being cut. This seems to be the case today, with regard to educational research. . . . Although the problems of short budgets cannot be ignored, nor can the necessiry [sic] to make cuts, it is false economy to eliminate research programs which have the possibility of finding more effective ways of teaching and learning. Even small savings in major school programs can easily make up for the small cost of educational research."

Clark (4) predicts, "There are no national trends to indicate that increased funds will be invested in R & D activity by either the federal government or private foundations. The experience of the recent past would argue that any increases over the next five years would be insufficient to offset the increased costs confronted by agencies carrying out R & D." He further predicts that funds supporting R & D by institutions of higher education will diminish as these institutions experience budget reduction due to declining enrollments.

The problem seems clear enough. If RDD&U is to obtain the needed financial support to truly become effective, a unified educational community must establish it as a priority. RDD&U must be perceived by education decision and policy makers as a necessary part of the process of education and beneficial to educational practice. Teachers, administrators, and researchers at the local, state, and national levels must be united in their appeal for support of RDD&U at all levels of funding. It should be pointed out to those who allocate budgetary dollars that about one half of one percent of educational dollars is spent in research, development, dissemination, and evaluation activities--a percentage that is much lower than agriculture (4 percent) or medicine (4-10 percent).

It is naive to think that increased support will come as a result of the demonstrated need through scholarly reports or because society will finally realize the great potential of RDD&U in increasing the effectiveness of education. Support for education is tied directly to the political process of state and federal government, and educators are just beginning to realize their potential

as a political force. If RDD&U is supported by the total educational community, the chances of increased financial support are good. If the educational community does not exercise its political influence in favor of RDD&U, little increased support is probable. [Note: Unless some radical changes in educational priorities occur in the major educational organizations (such as NEA, AFT, AASA, ASBA, or AACTE) I have little hope of a unified support for RDD&U. Presently, there seems to be a power struggle among factions within the educational community. The resulting outcome of this power struggle could not only eliminate the chances of a unified political support for RDD&U advancement, but conceivably could retard the total educational process for generations.]

To gain support for RDD&U, efforts can be undertaken to increase public awareness of the beneficial aspects. Burdin (3) advocated that audiences should be "delineated and dissemination carefully planned." His examples were state, county, and city legislative bodies, school boards, and other concerned citizens. He stated, "Today, there is need to assure that research reaches out to those who need it--from researcher to practitioners and decision maker to citizen--in an analytical-interpretive form to assure understanding and use by consumers as well as producers. Dissemination, like R & D, is grossly underfunded."

E. Summary

Educational research and development is conducted primarily in a select few institutions of higher education and in national centers and labs. Funding is primarily from federal sources and is much lower than comparable professionals. Researchers and practitioners generally have different perspectives on educational problems

resulting in poor relations between the two groups of educators. Innovation in schools is at best difficult to implement. Even when innovations are adopted, they are of questionable effectiveness due to poor implementation guidance, and are usually short term due to funding patterns. The most frequently recommended solution to the problems of educational RDD&U is the improvement of relations between the researcher and practitioners--a single solution with very difficult, complex, and expensive implications.

One strategy for improved RDD&U is increased communication between producers and consumers. A practical, convenient and understandable system of communication needs to be established to provide the teacher and administrator, teacher educator and state department personnel, and researchers with the means to share in all phases of RDD&U. It may be possible to develop a national RDD&U network that incorporates state and local educational agencies, universities and colleges, and national and private educational R & D agencies. Funding must be increased at all levels, especially at the local and state government level. Information about RDD&U should be publicized to inform citizens of the activities of local, state, and national efforts.

Whether I have made a valid assessment of RDD&U or whether the strategies suggested are realistic is open to interpretation. I think knowledge production and knowledge utilization in education will go through some lean years financially. When educational institutions at all levels are fighting for their financial lives, only the extremely optimistic can expect a favorable change in support

to RDD&U. If, however, the continued professionalism of local education personnel continues, and if institutions that prepare educators develop positive attitudes toward RDD&U, the time of famine for educational R & D will be reduced greatly.

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